

# Demographic Trends in the 20th Century

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# Chapter Highlights

## POPULATION SIZE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

### National Trends

The United States population more than tripled from 76 million people in 1900 to 281 million people in 2000.

The United States ranked as the fourth most populous country in the world from the start of the century until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, and as the world's third most populous country since then, after China and India.

The population growth of 32.7 million people in the 1990s was the largest numerical increase of any decade in U.S. history.

U.S. population density increased twofold during the period 1900 to 2000, but the level in 2000 (an average of 80 people per square mile) remained low in comparison with the density in most countries, and lower than the world population density of 120 people per square mile.

Between 1900 and 2000, the center of population shifted 324 miles west and 101 miles south, moving from Bartholomew County, Indiana, to Phelps County, Missouri.

The U.S. population grew increasingly metropolitan each decade, from 28 percent in 1910 to 80 percent in 2000.

The suburban portion of metropolitan areas, rather than central cities, accounted for most metropolitan growth during the century. By 2000, half of the U.S. population lived in suburban areas.

Nearly one-third of Americans lived in a metropolitan area with 5 million or more residents by the close of the century.

### Regional Trends

In 1900, the majority (62 percent) of the U.S. population lived in either the Northeast or the Midwest. However, by the end of the century, the majority (58 percent) of the population resided in either the South or West.

The population of the West grew faster than the population in each of the other three regions of the country in every decade of the 20th century.

The population density of the Northeast far exceeded the densities of the other regions from 1900 to 2000.

The Northeast also had the highest percentage of its population living in metropolitan areas for the entire 20th century.

### State Trends

In 1900, New York's population of 7.3 million exceeded that of any other state. In 2000, California had the largest population (33.9 million), and 10 other states (including New York) had populations larger than New York's population at the beginning of the century.

The 1990s was the first decade when none of the 50 states lost population, although the District of Columbia's population declined for the fifth consecutive decade.

From 1900 to 2000, Florida's ranking in population size increased more than any other state, from 33rd to 4th, followed by Arizona's, from 48th to 20th. Iowa's ranking declined the most, from 10th in 1900 to 30th in 2000.

Among the 50 states, Rhode Island had the highest population density from 1900 to 1960, and New Jersey had the highest population density from 1970 to 2000.

Alaska had the lowest population density of all states throughout the century. Excluding Alaska prior to its statehood in 1959, Nevada had the lowest population density every decade.

The percentage of population living in metropolitan areas increased for every state from 1910 to 2000. By 2000, the majority of the population in 37 of the 50 states lived in a metropolitan area.

# Chapter 1

## POPULATION SIZE AND GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The trends in the size and geographic distribution of the United States population reflect the country's historical trends in fertility, mortality, and internal and international migration. Over the course of the 20th century, the United States population experienced several major changes. Overall growth was substantial in both numerical and in percentage terms, although it varied from decade to decade. Although U.S. population growth was remarkable compared with other industrialized countries, the U.S. share of the world's population declined as less developed countries grew more rapidly. Population growth resulted in the country becoming increasingly more densely populated, but the large land area of the United States kept overall population density at a comparatively moderate level in global terms.

Regionally, the distribution of the U.S. population generally experienced a shift toward the South and the West. These regions dominated the 20th century's population growth, especially in the latter half of the century. The gains in total population share of the South and the West occurred at the expense of corresponding losses in population share of the Northeast and the Midwest.

State trends in population size, percentage growth, and rankings varied considerably. California accounted for one-sixth of national population growth during the 100-year period. Just eight states—California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and New Jersey—were responsible for more than half of the total population gain from 1900 to 2000. Not all states gained population in every decade. While several states in the South and the West stood out as clear

leaders in population growth trends during the century, states in the Northeast consistently ranked among the most densely populated.

“Metropolitanization” particularly characterized the demographic change of the United States in the 20th century. Prior to World War II, the majority of Americans lived outside of metropolitan territory. By the end of the century, 4 out of every 5 people in the United States resided in a metropolitan area. The growth of metropolitan areas in the 20th century was essentially a growth of the suburban population (defined here as the metropolitan population living outside of central cities), especially in the latter half of the century. In 2000, the central city population represented a smaller share of the U.S. population than it did in 1950. By the end of the century, the percentage metropolitan in the regions ranged from 74 percent in the Midwest to 90 percent in the Northeast. Eight states—California, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island—had all reached at least 90 percent metropolitan population by 2000.

The graphics and text in this chapter portray the decade-to-decade trends in the U.S. population. State trends often are covered graphically through the use of thematic maps showing data for the beginning, middle, and end of the century. Trends in population density and metropolitan population are also discussed. Detailed data for each decade for the United States, regions, and states on total population size, population density, and metropolitan classification are provided in Appendix Tables 1, 2, and 3. State trends and rankings based on total population size include Alaska and Hawaii.

## The U.S. population more than tripled from 76 million in 1900 to 281 million in 2000.

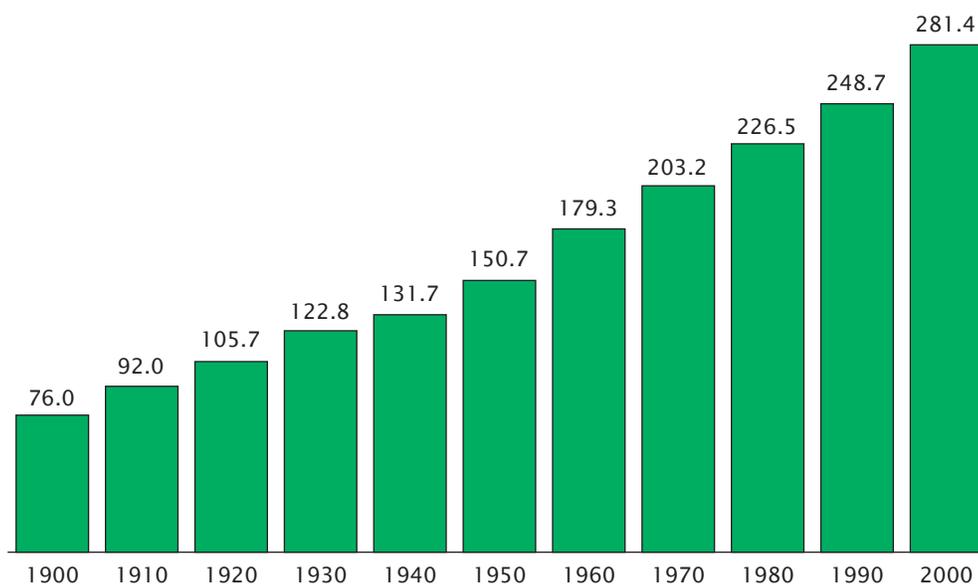
The United States population more than tripled, growing from 76 million people in 1900 to 281 million people in 2000 (see Figure 1-1). From the start of the century until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States ranked as the fourth most populous country in the world, and since 1991 as the world's third most populous country. The net addition of more than 200 million people to the U.S. population over the course of the 20th century represents more than the current population of every country in the world, except China, India, and Indonesia.

Net change in the U.S. population results from adding births, subtracting deaths, adding people who migrated to the United States, and subtracting people who left the country. During the past 100 years, net immigration to the United States was roughly 40 million people. In the same period, about 330 million babies were born, and nearly 165 million people died. The subtraction of total births minus total deaths yields a

natural increase of about 165 million people, which includes the natural increase contribution resulting from births and deaths to migrants.

Many social and demographic factors contributed to the huge growth of the U.S. population in the 20th century. Declining mortality was one such factor. As public sanitation, personal hygiene, and scientific and medical technology improved, life expectancy improved. Average life expectancy at birth increased by about 30 years over the course of the 20th century, from about 47 years in 1900 to about 77 years in 2000. Infants, in particular, benefited from 20th century advances in health and medicine. The infant mortality rate (the number of deaths to infants less than 1 year of age per 1,000 births) decreased sharply over the century, from a rate well in excess of 100 per 1,000 births at the start of the century, to a rate less than 10 per 1,000 births by the century's end.

Figure 1-1.  
**Total Population: 1900 to 2000**  
(Millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## The 1990 to 2000 population increase was the largest in U.S. history.

Population growth in the United States varied greatly throughout the century, both numerically and in percentage terms. The population growth of 32.7 million in the 1990s was the largest numerical increase in U.S. history (see Figure 1-2).<sup>1</sup> The previous record increase was in the 1950s, a gain fueled primarily by the post-World War II baby boom (1946 to 1964).

Population growth in the 1930s was the smallest of any decade during the period 1900 to 2000. The low growth in this Depression-era decade was due to low levels of fertility and negligible net international migration.

The decade-to-decade pattern of the percentage change in population followed the same up-and-down course as the numerical population change. However, while the maximum numerical population increase occurred in the last decade of the century, the highest percentage increase in the total U.S. population took place at the start of the century, 1900-1910.<sup>2</sup> During

this period, the country experienced relatively high birth rates and, most significantly, the arrival of an exceptionally large number of immigrants. Immigration and high fertility levels also contributed to the high growth of the following two decades, 1910-1920 and 1920-1930.

The 1930s, which was the decade with the lowest numerical increase in population, also was the decade with the lowest percentage increase (7.2 percent). After this low point, the population growth rate increased in the 1940s and 1950s.

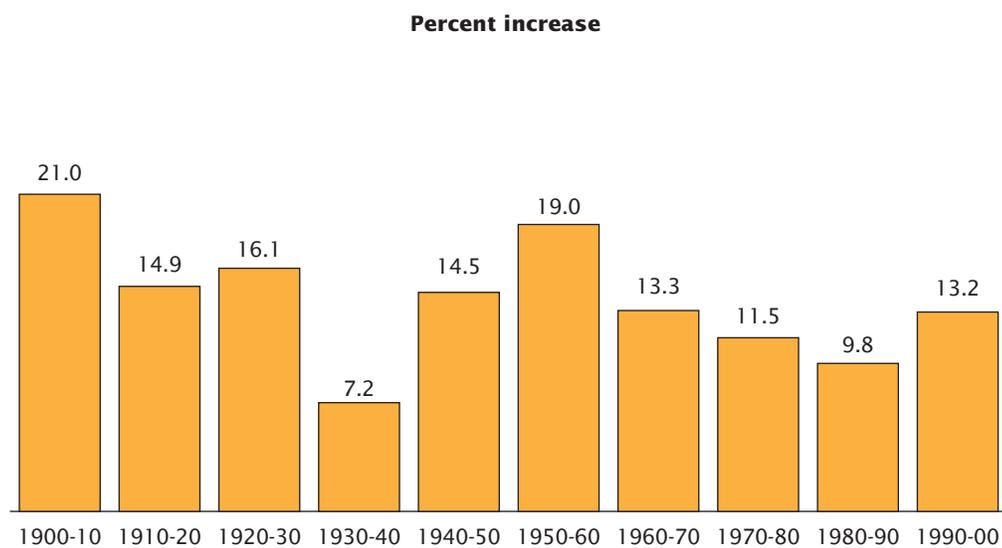
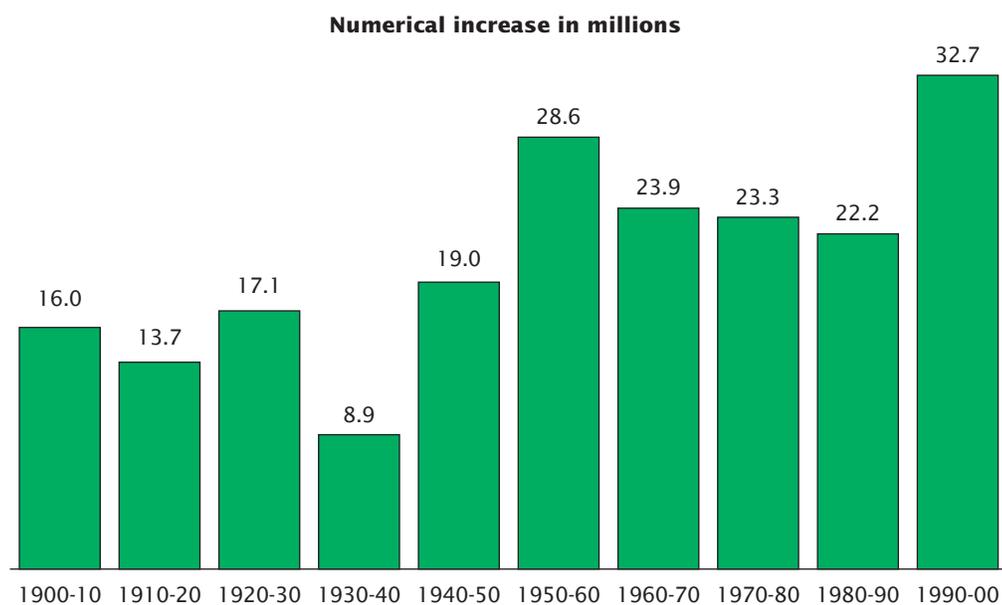
While the first period of rapid population growth was due primarily to immigration, the second period, from 1950 to 1960, was due primarily to the post World War II baby boom. The 1950s represented the second highest decade of population increase during the century in both numerical (28.6 million) and percentage (19.0 percent) terms.

After the high growth rate in the 1950s, the percentage increase in population declined over the next three decades. The U.S. population continued to grow, but at an increasingly slower rate. However, the rate of population growth increased during the 1990s for the first decade since the 1950s, exceeding the growth rate of the 1970s and 1980s, but still less than in the first three decades of the century.

<sup>1</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau, 2001g, *Population Change and Distribution: 1990 to 2000*, by Marc J. Perry and Paul J. Mackun. Population change in any decade may result from changes in census coverage, as well as from births, deaths, and net international migration.

<sup>2</sup> The higher percentage increase results because the total population base in 1900 (76.0 million) is much smaller than the population base in 1990 (248.7 million).

Figure 1-2.  
**Population Increase by Decade: 1900 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## From 1950 to 2000, the United States and the rest of the developed world comprised a declining share of the world's population.

Population estimates prepared by the U.S. Census Bureau for all countries of the world provide an opportunity to view the trend in U.S. population growth in a global context.<sup>3</sup> As noted earlier, the United States ranked as the fourth most populous country in the world from 1900 until the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and has ranked as the world's third most populous country since then. China and India ranked 1st and 2nd, respectively, in total population size throughout the 20th century.

In 1950, using present-day boundaries, the ten most populous countries were (in order): China, India, the United States, Russia, Japan, Indonesia, Germany, Brazil, the United Kingdom, and Italy. By 2000, the ten most populous countries were: China, India, the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, and Nigeria.

Over the 50-year period, seven countries stayed among the ten most populous countries. The countries that

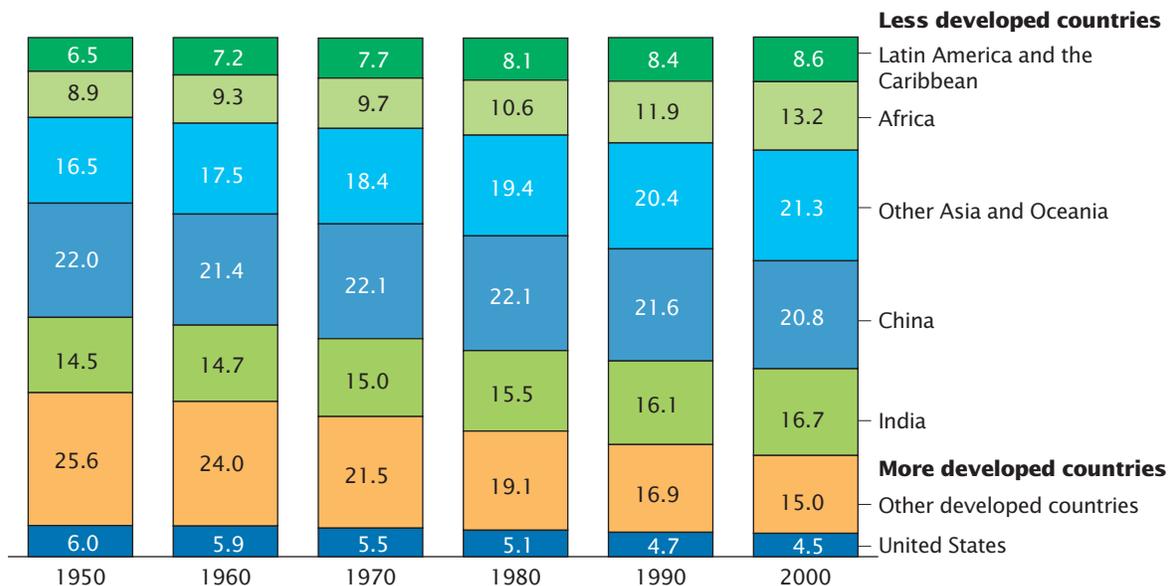
dropped out of the top ten (Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy) were among the world's more developed countries (MDCs), and were replaced by Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria, all less developed countries (LDCs).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Russia and Japan (both MDCs) dropped in rank, while the ranks of Indonesia and Brazil (both LDCs) increased.

China constituted about one-fifth of the world's population throughout the latter half of the century (see Figure 1-3). More than one-third of the world's population lived in either China or India. The U.S. share of the world's population declined each decade, from 6.0 percent in 1950 to 4.5 percent in 2000. Due to faster growth rates of LDCs than of MDCs, the combined share of the United States and all other MDCs fell from about one-third (32 percent) of the world's population in 1950 to about one-fifth (19 percent) in 2000. In contrast, the share of world population increased in each of the less developed regions.

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau, the International Data Base at [www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html).

<sup>4</sup> For the definition of more developed countries and less developed countries, see the Glossary.

Figure 1-3.  
**World Population Distribution: 1950 to 2000**  
(Percent)



Note: Estimates are for July 1.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base, [www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html](http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html).

## U.S. population density tripled between 1900 and 2000, but remained relatively low compared to most countries.

Given a fixed land area, any increase or decrease in population is accompanied by a corresponding increase (or decrease) in population density.<sup>5</sup> Over the course of the century, the population density of the United States tripled from 26 people per square mile of land area in 1900 to 80 people per square mile in 2000 (see Figure 1-4).

In 1959, Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states, respectively. The addition of Alaska, the largest U.S. state in terms of land area, had a major impact on population density. In interpreting the historical trend, population density actually declined slightly from 1950 (not including Alaska and Hawaii prior to statehood) to 1960 (including Alaska and Hawaii). The effect of including Alaska and Hawaii on the trend in population density for the period 1900 to 1950 is shown in Figure 1-4.

<sup>5</sup> Density represents the average number of people per unit of land area (such as square miles, square kilometers). All density calculations for the United States, regions, and states in this report are based on land area measurement used for Census 2000.

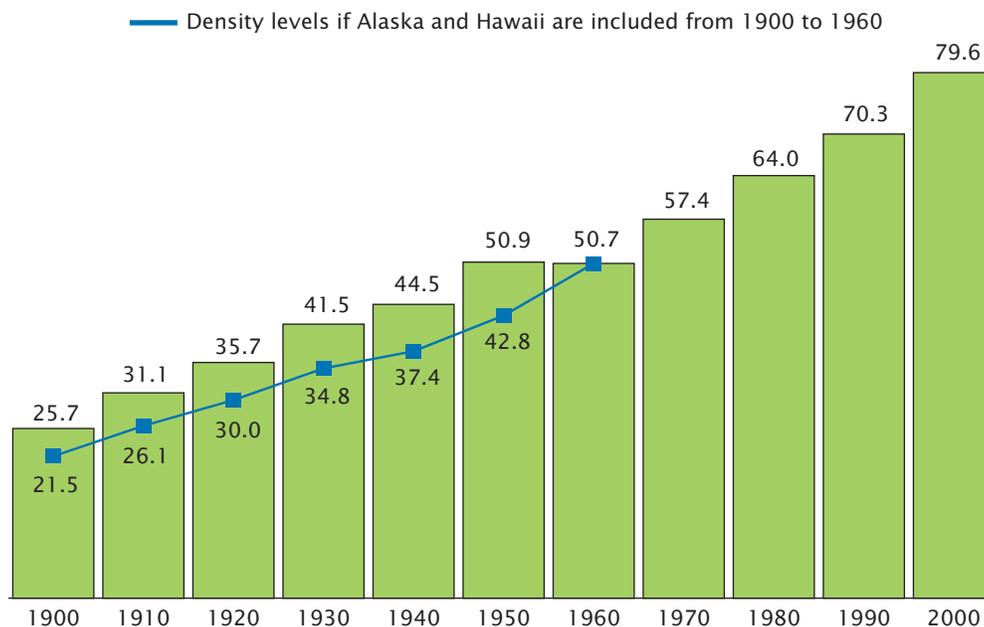
Although population density tripled during the period 1900 to 2000, the U.S. density level in 2000 remained relatively low in comparison with most countries of the world, and lower than the overall world population density of 120 people per square mile.

Density levels vary considerably among the countries of the world. Among countries with 5 million or more people in 2000, Australia, Canada, and Libya each had population densities less than 10 people per square mile, while the Netherlands and South Korea had densities of over 1,200 people per square mile, and Bangladesh had a density of nearly 2,500. Of the world's ten most populous countries in 2000, Russia, Brazil, and the United States all had relatively low density levels (less than 100), followed by Indonesia, Nigeria, China, and Pakistan (in the 300 to 500 range), Japan and India (829 and 883, respectively), and then Bangladesh.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2000* (120th edition), Washington, DC.

Figure 1-4.  
**Population Density: 1900 to 2000**

(People per square mile of land area)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## Between 1900 and 2000, the mean center of the U.S. population moved about 324 miles west and 101 miles south.

Each decade, after tabulating the results of the decennial census, the Census Bureau calculates the mean and median centers of population. The “mean center of population” refers to the point at which an imaginary, flat, weightless, and rigid map of the United States would balance perfectly if weights of identical value were placed on it so that each weight represented the location of one person on the date of the census.

Historically, the mean center of population has followed a trail that reflects the movement of the country’s population across America. The trend follows a path indicating the settling of the frontier, waves of immigration, and internal migration west and south.

Over the course of the 20th century, the mean center of population continually moved westward, starting from Bartholomew County, Indiana, in 1900, progressing through Indiana, crossing Illinois, and by 2000 stopping in Phelps County, Missouri (see Figure 1-5). This represents a shift of 324 miles west and 101 miles south from its location at the start of the century.

From 1900 through 1940, the mean center of population was in the southern part of Indiana. From 1950 through 1970, it was in Illinois, and from 1980 through 2000, it was in Missouri.

During the second half of the century, the mean center continued to shift westward, and during the last five decades, began also to move in an increasingly southerly direction. Of the 101 miles the mean moved southward from 1900 to 2000, 22 miles were moved between 1900 and 1950, but 79 miles between 1950 and 2000.<sup>7</sup>

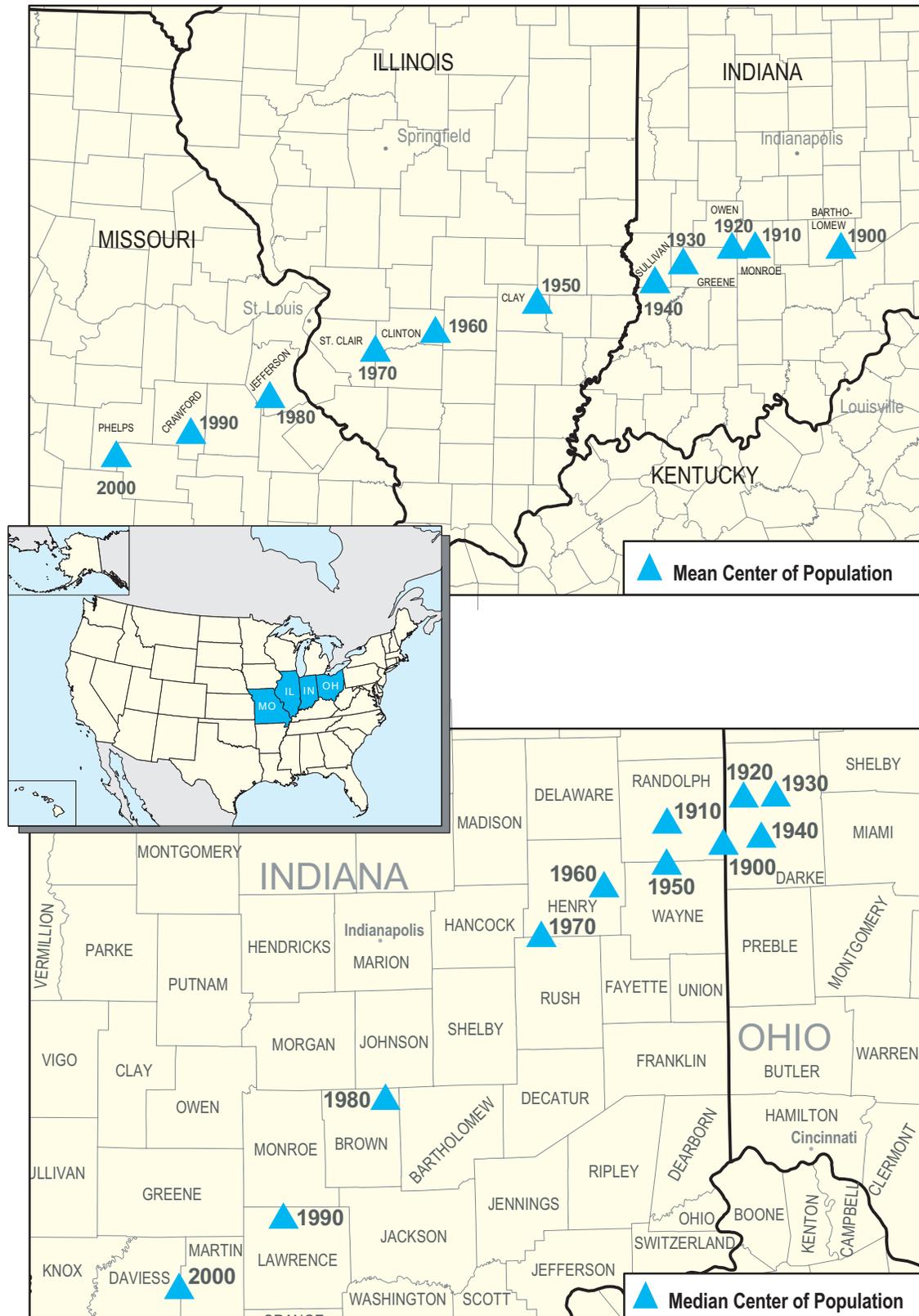
<sup>7</sup> The calculation of the mean center of population for 1900 through 1950 is based on the population of the conterminous United States and for 1960 through 2000 includes the populations of Alaska and Hawaii. Including Alaska and Hawaii in 1960 had the effect of shifting the mean center about 2 miles farther south and about 10 miles farther west.

Another measure of the geographic center of population is the “median center of population.” The median center is located at the intersection of two median lines, a north-south line constructed so that half of the country’s population lives east and half lives west of it, and an east-west line selected so that half of the country’s population lives north and half lives south of it. The median center of population is less sensitive to population shifts than the mean center, since it is only affected by population movements that cross the north-south or the east-west median lines.

In every decade of the 20th century, the median center of population was located in either Indiana or Ohio. In 1900 and 1910, the median was in Randolph County, Indiana. At the next three censuses, 1920, 1930, and 1940, the median was located farther east in Darke County, Ohio, a southwestern county in Ohio bordering Indiana. The eastward trend of the median in 1920, 1930, and 1940 compared with 1900 and 1910 may be attributed in part to the impact of migration to industrial urban areas in the Northeast.

The relatively strong westward and southerly shift of the mean center of population in the latter half of the 20th century is paralleled by movement of the median center during the same period. In 1950, the median center had returned to Indiana in a county (Wayne county) adjacent to and south of its location in 1900 and 1910 (Randolph county). Over the next five decades, the median center moved much farther south and west within the state of Indiana, reaching Daviess County at the close of the century. The largest shifts in the median center of population occurred during the 1970s and 1980s.

Figure 1-5.  
**Mean and Median Centers of Population: 1900 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Geography Division.

## The South and West accounted for nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population increase from 1900 to 2000.

While all four regions<sup>8</sup> of the United States grew considerably in the 20th century, the South and the West experienced the largest increases in population, 76 million and 59 million, respectively. Combined, these two regions increased by 471 percent during the century, compared with the combined increase of 149 percent for the Northeast and Midwest. Between 1900 and 2000, the combined increase of 135 million people in the South and the West represented 66 percent of the U.S. population increase of 205 million people.

From 1900 to 2000, the population more than doubled in the Northeast (21 million to 54 million) and in the Midwest (26 million to 64 million). The South's population during this period quadrupled from 25 million to 100 million, while the West's population was more than fifteen times larger in 2000, increasing from 4 million in 1900 to 63 million at the end of the century (see Figure 1-6).

From 1900 to 1930, the Midwest was the most populous region of the country. From 1940 onward, the South had the largest population of all the regions. By 2000, the West's population (63 million) had nearly reached the Midwest's population (64 million). The Northeast (by far the smallest in land area) became the country's least populous region by 1990 and remained the least populous in 2000.

Despite the West's phenomenal growth in population, it remained the region with the smallest proportion of the U.S. population as recently as 1980 (see Figure 1-7). As recently as 1950, the West's proportion (13 percent) of the total U.S. population was just half of the next largest region (Northeast, 26 percent). Yet by 1990, the West's population had become a larger proportion of the total

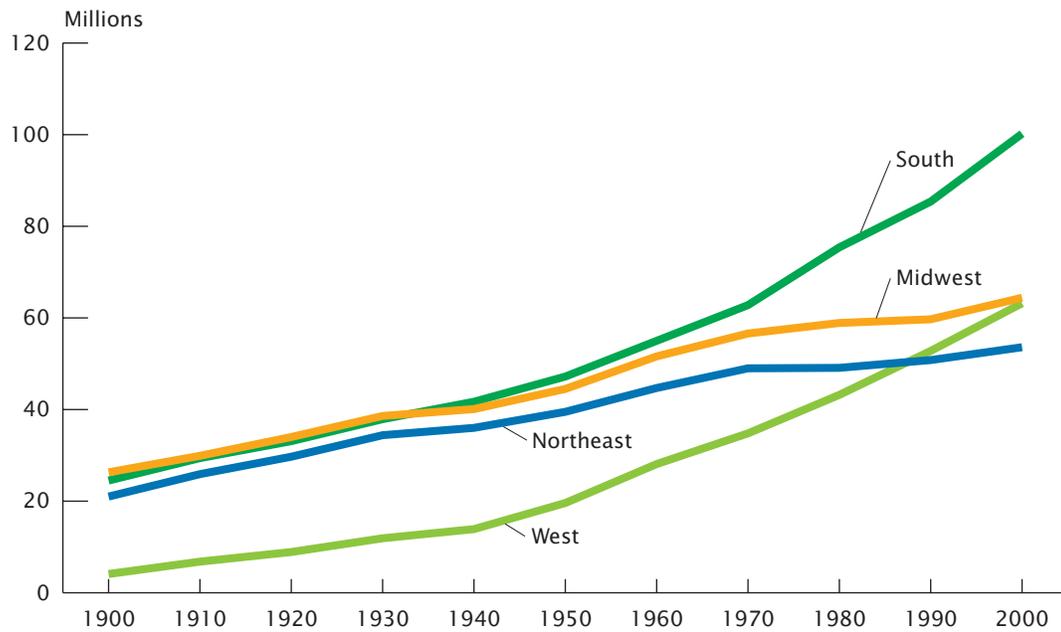
U.S. population than the Northeast's, and appears likely to overtake the Midwest as the country's second most populous region in the near future.

One of the most significant demographic trends of the 20th century has been the steady shifting of the population west and south. (See the earlier discussion of the mean and median centers of population, Figure 1-5.) In 1900, the majority (62 percent) of the population lived in either the Northeast or the Midwest. This combined proportion declined each decade during the century. By 1980, the majority (52 percent) of the country's population resided in either the South or the West. This trend continued to the end of the century, with the combined South and West regional populations representing 58 percent of the total population of the United States in 2000.

More than one-third of the U.S. population lived in the South in 2000, and about one-third (between 31 to 36 percent) lived in this region over the entire century. The Northeast represented about one-fourth of the U.S. population for most of the century (ranging between 24 percent to 28 percent during the period 1900 to 1970), but its share declined every decade since 1910, to about one-fifth of the U.S. population in 2000. The Midwest's share of the country's total population declined every decade throughout the century, and its percentage-point decline was even more than the Northeast's. The Midwest's share fell by 12 percentage points, from more than one-third (35 percent) of the total population in 1900 to just under one-fourth (23 percent) in 2000. The West represented just 5 percent of the country's population in 1900, but its share increased every decade of the century and reached 22 percent in 2000. As a result of the changing regional distribution of population over the course of the century, the West, Midwest, and Northeast each represented similar fractions (around one-fifth) of the total U.S. population in 2000.

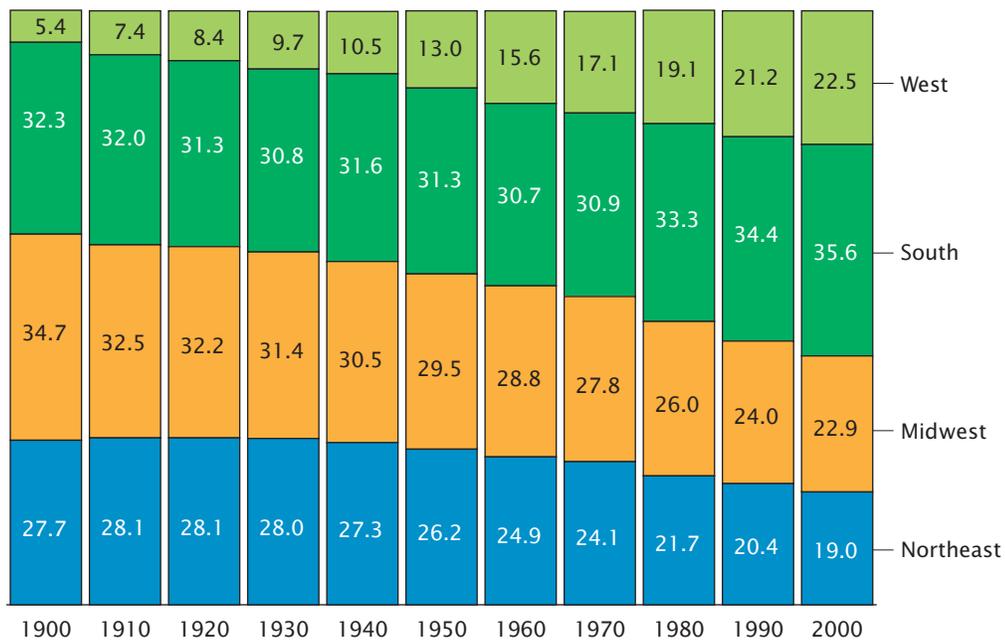
<sup>8</sup> Since the 1950 census, the U.S. Census Bureau has classified all states and the District of Columbia into one of four regions—Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. For the definition of each region by state, see the Glossary.

Figure 1-6.  
**Total Population by Region: 1900 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

Figure 1-7.  
**Population Distribution by Region: 1900 to 2000**  
 (Percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## The West grew faster every decade than all other U.S. regions.

The population of the West grew faster than the other three regions of the country in every decade of the 20th century (see Figure 1-8). In fact, with the exception of the 1930s, the rate of growth in the West was at least double the rate of the other regions for the decades from 1900 to 1960.

For most of the century, the West and the South experienced relatively higher growth rates than the Northeast and the Midwest. The Northeast and the Midwest both had relatively lower growth rates in the 1930s and each decade from the 1960s through the 1990s. The Northeast also had a growth rate below 10 percent in the 1940s. Every region had growth rates above 10 percent during the century's first three decades, when net immigration and fertility rates were generally higher, and again in the 1950s during the peak baby boom years.

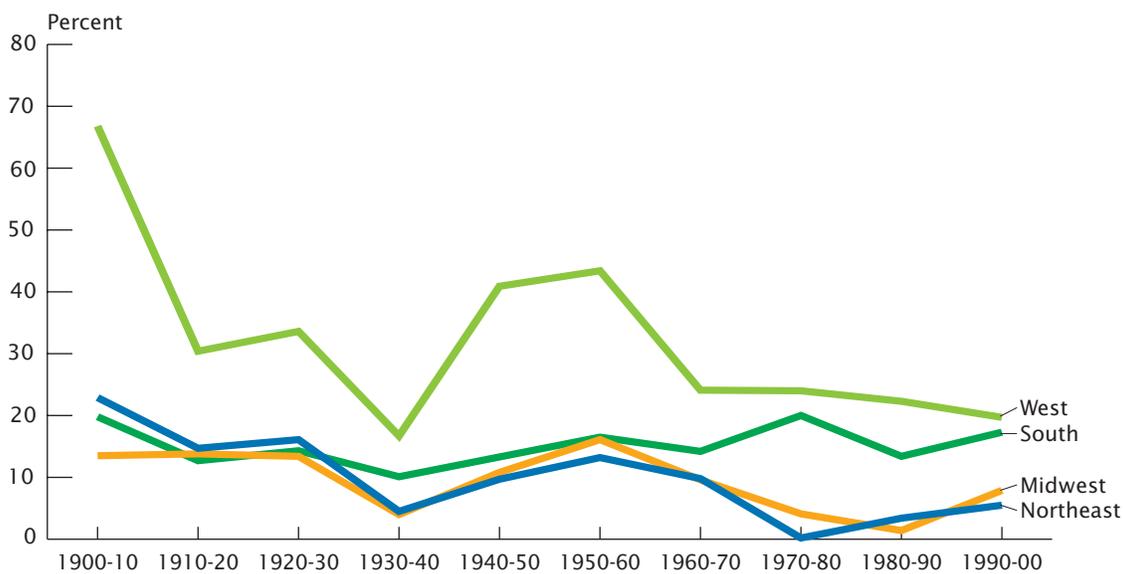
In the first third of the century (i.e., 1900 to 1930), the Northeast had the second highest growth rate among the regions. The South replaced the Northeast as the second fastest growing region in the country in the 1930s and remained so for the rest of the century.

The Northeast and Midwest experienced similar growth rate trends every decade since the 1910 to 1920 period. Either the Northeast or the Midwest was the slowest-growing region during every decade of the century, with the exception of 1910 to 1920, when the South had a slightly lower growth rate than the other regions.

The growth of the population peaked in the decade 1900 to 1910 for both the Northeast (23 percent) and the West (67 percent). The 1950s represented the peak decade for the growth of the population in the Midwest (16 percent), and the 1970s was the fastest-growing decade in the South (20 percent).

The growth of the population reached its lowest point for both the South (10 percent) and the West (17 percent) in the 1930s Depression-era decade, which was the period with the lowest growth rate for the United States as a whole. The West's lowest percentage growth during the century (in the 1930s) exceeded the Midwest's highest percentage growth (in the 1950s). The lowest growth decade for the Northeast was the 1970s, with an increase of just 0.2 percent, and the Midwest's lowest growth decade was the 1980s (1.4 percent).

Figure 1-8.  
**Percent Change in Population per Decade by Region:  
1900 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## The Northeast was the most densely populated region throughout the 20th century.

While the Midwest (until 1930) and the South (since 1940) had the largest populations among the regions, and the West grew the fastest each decade, the population density of the Northeast far exceeded the densities of the other regions from 1900 to 2000 (see Figure 1-9). The West's land area, which constitutes nearly half of the total U.S. land area, had the fewest people per square mile of the regions.

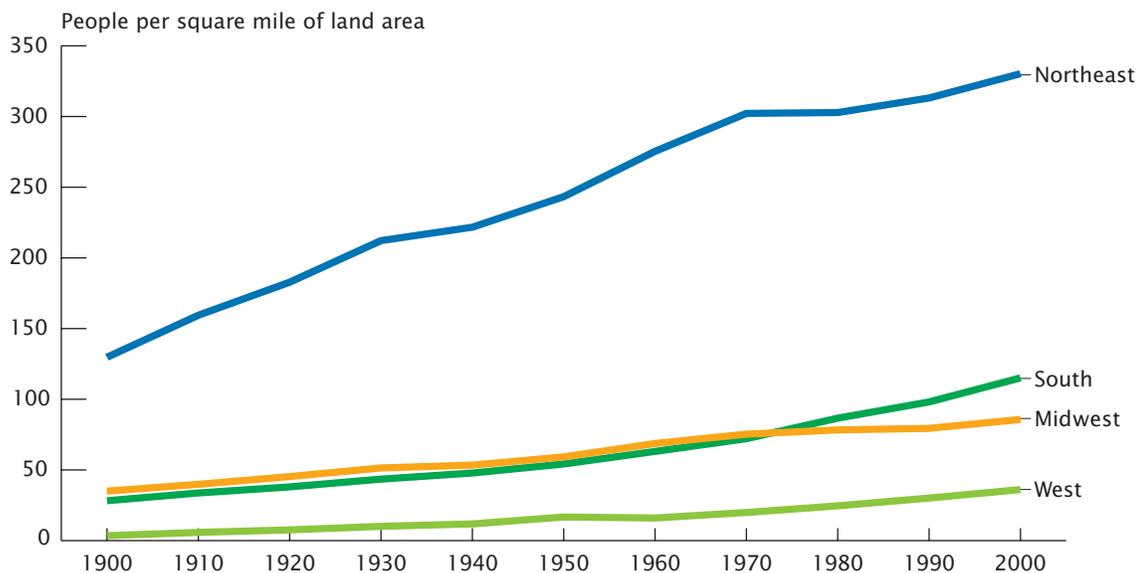
The Midwest and the South had similar density levels and trends over the period 1900 to 1970, with the Midwest's density slightly higher than the South's. Since 1980, the South's density level has exceeded the Midwest's level, making the South the second most densely populated region, and the gap between these two regions widened between 1980 and 2000.

Population density levels reflect a combination of population and land area. Although the Northeast represented the smallest share (19 percent) of the U.S. population in 2000, it represented an even smaller share (about 5 percent) of the U.S. land area. Thus, the Northeast had about one-fifth of the U.S. population living in just one-twentieth of the country's land area.

In contrast, while the West also represented about one-fifth (22 percent) of the U.S. population in 2000, this population lived in 50 percent of the U.S. land area, resulting in low population density. In 2000, the Midwest's shares of population and land area were similar, 23 and 21 percent, respectively, while the South's population share (36 percent) was greater than its share (25 percent) of the U.S. land area.

Density levels, along with total population, increased every decade for each region of the country, except for the West, where a slight decline occurred from 1950 to 1960, due to the addition to the region of Alaska, a large-area, low-density state (see Appendix Table 2). Even after 100 years of population growth and high rates of growth in the West and, in recent decades, the South, density levels in the Midwest, South, and West in 2000 were still less than the Northeast's population density at the start of the century. Between 1900 and 2000, the average number of people per square mile increased from 130 to 330 in the Northeast, from 35 to 86 in the Midwest, from 28 to 115 in the South, and from 3 to 36 in the West.

Figure 1-9.  
**Population Density by Region: 1900 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## **In 1900, nearly half of the states had fewer than 1 million people. By 2000, only 7 states (and the District of Columbia) had a population under 1 million.**

At the beginning of the century, no state had 10 million or more people. In 1900, state population totals ranged from a low of 42,000 in Nevada to 7.3 million in New York (see Appendix Table 1). By 1950, three states, New York, Pennsylvania, and California had passed the 10-million mark. At the end of the century, 7 states had reached a population of at least 10 million—California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. The state with the most people in 2000 was California, with a population of 33.9 million.

In 1900, New York and Pennsylvania were the only states with populations of at least 5 million (see Figure 1-10). By 1950, four states—Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas had between 5 and 10 million people. (As noted above, after the first five decades of the century, New York and Pennsylvania had crossed the threshold of 10 million.) By 2000, a total of 13 states had a population size between 5 and 10 million, comprised of 12 new states, plus 1 holdover, Michigan, from 1950.

Twenty-three states had fewer than 1 million residents in 1900, and 12 of these states were in the West.<sup>9</sup> By 1950, the number of states with fewer than 1 million residents had fallen to 16, and 9 of these were western states. Only 7 states had populations of less than 1 million throughout the century. In 2000, Wyoming had the fewest people, with a population of 494,000, followed by Vermont, Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, and Montana.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The District of Columbia, considered a state equivalent for statistical purposes, had less than 1 million residents for the entire century.

<sup>10</sup> The District of Columbia, with 572,059 residents in 2000, had a smaller population than every state, except Wyoming.

Florida was the only state to grow from a population of less than 1 million at the start of the century to a population of over 10 million by the century's end.

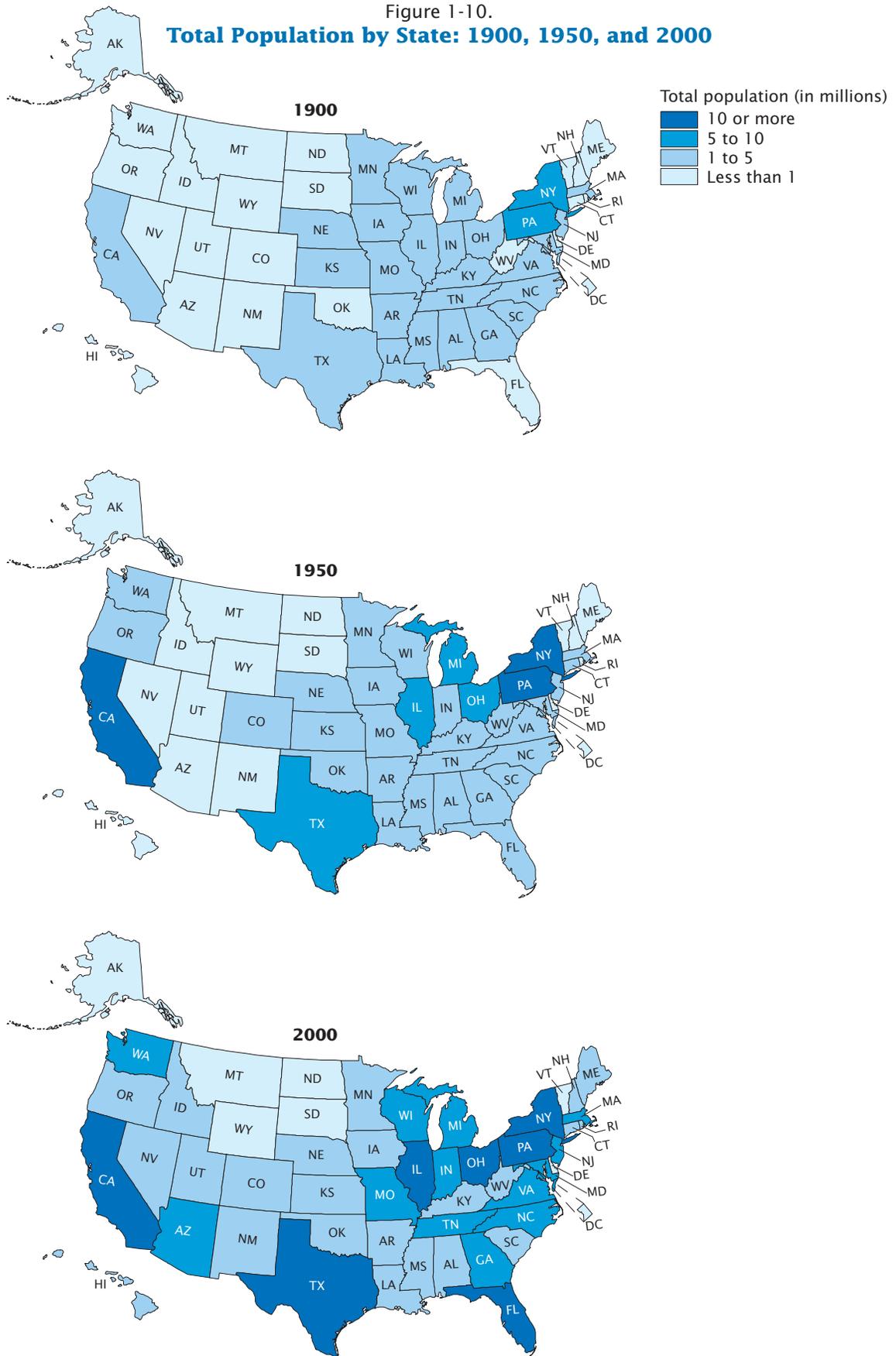
Only 4 states—California, Illinois, Ohio, and Texas—grew from between 1 and 5 million in 1900 to join the 10-million-and-over club by the end of the century. California had already grown to a population of over 10 million by midcentury, increasing greatly from just 1.5 million people in 1900 to 10.6 million people in 1950. Illinois reached 10 million by 1960 and Ohio and Texas by 1970.

Arizona and Washington were the only states to increase from less than 1 million population in 1900 to between 5 million and 10 million (5.1 and 5.9 million, respectively) in 2000.

In 2000, California was the only state with a population of more than 30 million. Texas (with a population of 20.9 million in 2000) was the only other state to have crossed the 20-million threshold.

As mentioned above, New York's total population of 7.3 million in 1900 was greater than any other state. By 2000, the populations of 11 states exceeded this figure: in addition to the 7 states with 10 million or more population listed above, Michigan (9.9 million), Georgia (8.2 million), New Jersey (8.4 million), and North Carolina (8.0 million) had populations that were larger than New York's had been at the start of the 20th century.

Figure 1-10.  
**Total Population by State: 1900, 1950, and 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900, 1950, and 2000.



## The population declined in more states in the 1930s than during any other 20th century decade, and the 1990s was the first decade when no state's population declined.

Although every state's population was larger at the century's end than at the start, the population of every state did not grow in each individual decade. During the century, a decline in population from one census to the next in either a state or the District of Columbia occurred 32 times (see Table 1-1).

The 32 instances of population decline during the ten decades of the century took place in just 15 states (and the District of Columbia). The District of Columbia's population declined most often during the period, losing population every decade since the 1950s. North Dakota's population fell four times between censuses; Mississippi's and West Virginia's populations fell three times; and Arkansas's, Iowa's, Oklahoma's, South Dakota's, and Vermont's populations each fell twice. Seven states experienced one decade of population decline during the century: Alaska, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Nevada, and Wyoming. By region, the group represents five states in the Midwest, four (and the District of Columbia) in the South, four in the West, and two in the Northeast.

Of the 32 instances of population decline, southern states (and the District of Columbia) accounted for 15, midwestern states for 10, western states for 4, and northeastern states for 3 declines.

More states declined in population in the 1930s than in any other decade of the 20th century. Nearly all the state population declines in this period occurred in Great Plains states, extending northward from Oklahoma to Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota.

Only states in the South and Midwest lost population between censuses during the period 1940 to 1970. In the 1950s, only southern states lost population. The only states outside the South and the Midwest to lose population since 1930 were New York (1970s), Vermont (1930s), and Wyoming (1980s). New York's population decline (679,000) was by far the largest of any decade: no other state level decline exceeded 200,000.

The 1990s was the first decade when none of the 50 states lost population, although the District of Columbia's population declined for the fifth consecutive decade.

Table 1-1.  
**States Experiencing Intercensal Population Decline: 1900-1910 to 1990-2000**

Decade and state	Region	Change	Decade and state	Region	Change
<b>1900-1910</b>			<b>1950-1960</b>		
Iowa .....	Midwest	-7,082	Arkansas .....	South	-123,239
<b>1910-1920</b>			District of Columbia .....	South	-38,222
Vermont .....	Northeast	-3,528	Mississippi .....	South	-773
Mississippi .....	South	-6,496	West Virginia .....	South	-145,131
Alaska .....	West	-9,320	<b>1960-1970</b>		
Nevada .....	West	-4,468	North Dakota .....	Midwest	-14,685
<b>1920-1930</b>			South Dakota .....	Midwest	-15,007
Montana .....	West	-11,283	District of Columbia .....	South	-7,446
<b>1930-1940</b>			West Virginia .....	South	-116,184
Vermont .....	Northeast	-380	<b>1970-1980</b>		
Kansas .....	Midwest	-79,971	New York .....	Northeast	-678,895
Nebraska .....	Midwest	-62,129	District of Columbia .....	South	-118,177
North Dakota .....	Midwest	-38,910	<b>1980-1990</b>		
South Dakota .....	Midwest	-49,888	Iowa .....	Midwest	-137,053
Oklahoma .....	South	-59,606	North Dakota .....	Midwest	-13,917
<b>1940-1950</b>			District of Columbia .....	South	-31,433
North Dakota .....	Midwest	-22,299	West Virginia .....	South	-156,167
Arkansas .....	South	-39,876	Wyoming .....	West	-15,969
Mississippi .....	South	-4,882	<b>1990-2000</b>		
Oklahoma .....	South	-103,083	District of Columbia .....	South	-34,841

Note: The District of Columbia is considered a state equivalent for statistical purposes.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.

## **Nine western states and Florida accounted for the ten fastest-growing states from 1900 to 1950 and eight western states plus Florida and Texas were the fastest growing from 1950 to 2000.**

At the state level, patterns of percentage change in population portray a different picture than patterns of numerical population change. In any period, a state with a small base population may not grow a large amount in terms of population numbers, but may increase by a large proportion of its original population size.

From 1900 to 2000, Nevada's population grew faster (4,620 percent) than the population of any other state. Arizona ranked second, with an increase of 4,074 percent. Western states accounted for 9 of the 10 fastest-growing states during this period. The southern state of Florida ranked third, with an increase of 2,924 percent.

In contrast, no western state ranked among the ten slowest-growing states during the century, while states in each of the other regions did. Iowa had the lowest percentage increase (31 percent) from 1900 to 2000, followed by Nebraska (60 percent).

During the first half of the century, states in the West also accounted for 9 of the 10 states with the highest percentage growth in population (see Figure 1-12). The top five states from 1900 to 1950 were (in rank order): California, Arizona, Florida, Washington, and Nevada. During this period, California grew by more than 600 percent. The populations of the ten fastest-growing states at least tripled (increased by 200 percent or more). The populations of an additional 12 states (and the District of Columbia) more than doubled in size.

From 1900 to 1950, the ten slowest-growing states all grew by less than 50 percent. Vermont grew the slowest (10 percent), followed by Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and New Hampshire.

Western states also accounted for 8 of the 10 fastest-growing states in the 1950 to 2000 period. From 1950 to 2000, the five fastest-growing states (in rank order) were: Nevada, Arizona, Florida, Alaska, and Colorado. Nevada's population increased by more than 1,100 percent during this period.

During the second half of the century, the populations of 7 states at least tripled, while the populations of 11 additional states more than doubled.

From 1950 to 2000, the ten states or state equivalent with the lowest percentage changes were: the District of Columbia, West Virginia, North Dakota, Iowa, South Dakota, Pennsylvania, New York, Nebraska, Mississippi, and Rhode Island. During this period, the populations of the District of Columbia and West Virginia declined by 29 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

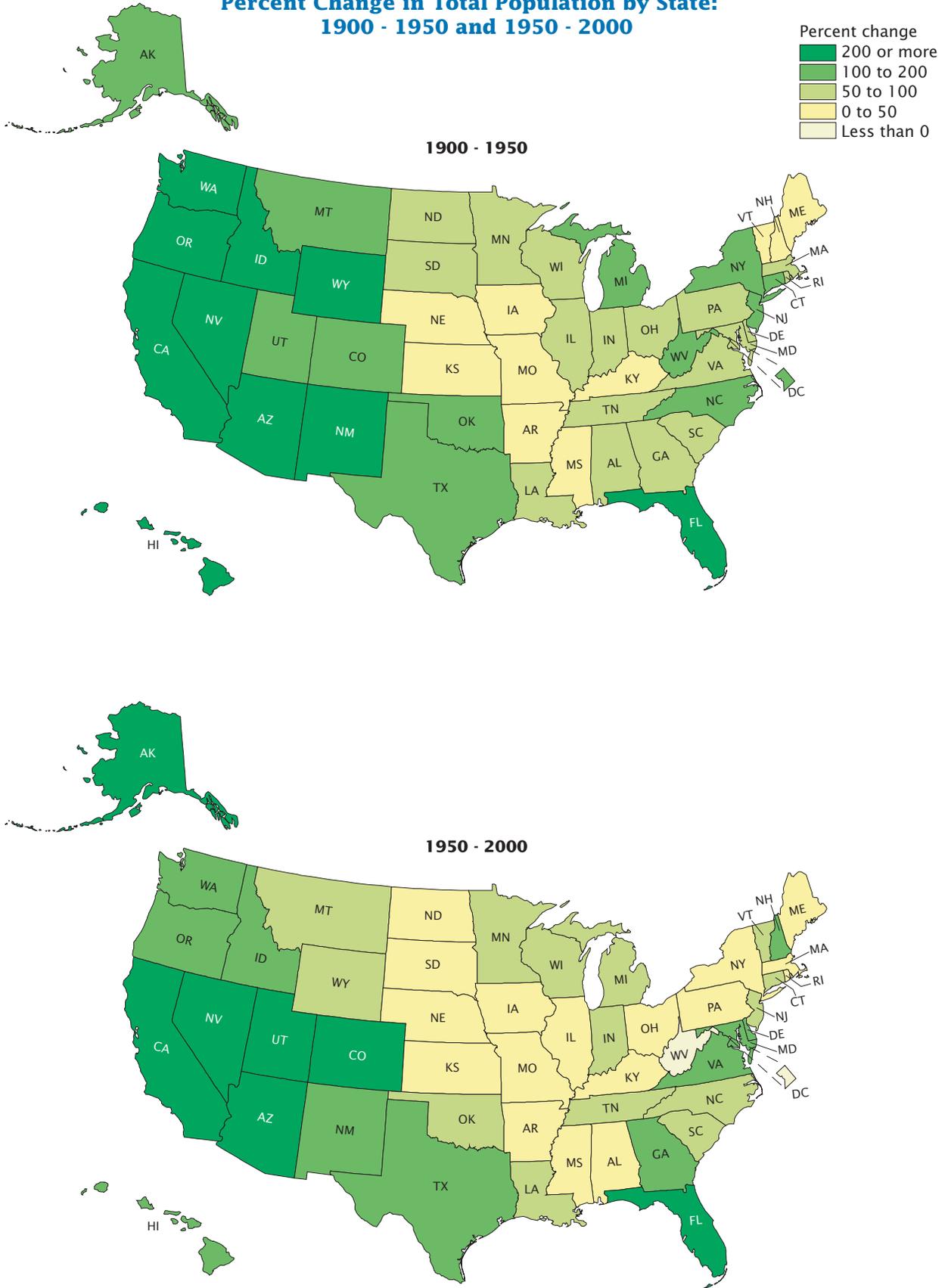
Comparing population change in the first and second halves of the century, California grew fastest in the first part and Nevada in the second half. Nevada, Arizona, and Florida ranked among the five fastest-growing states in both periods. In addition, California, New Mexico, and Washington ranked among the ten fastest-growing states for each 50-year period.

Iowa was the only state to appear among the five slowest-growing states in population for both halves of the century, while Nebraska and Mississippi were among the ten slowest-growing states.

The population of 11 western states, Florida, and Texas at least doubled in size during both 50-year periods.

Figure 1-12.

**Percent Change in Total Population by State:  
1900 - 1950 and 1950 - 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900, 1950, and 2000.

## Florida's rank by population size jumped the most, while Iowa's fell the most from 1900 to 2000.

The numeric and percentage change in population size for the 50 states and the District of Columbia varied widely over the century. These differences produced marked shifts in the relative ranking of states in terms of population size (see Table 1-2).

Between 1900 and 2000, 15 states ranked among the 10 most populous at least once. Six of them were among the ten largest throughout the century—Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Of the remaining nine, four were among the ten largest in 1900 but then dropped below this rank and never re-entered—Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Massachusetts; three entered the ten largest and never left—California, Florida, and New Jersey; North Carolina was the tenth largest in 1950; and Georgia was the tenth largest state in 1910 and in 2000 (see Appendix Table 1).

New York had the largest state population from 1900 through the 1960 census. California became the largest state by the 1970 census and has remained the most populous. Texas became the second largest state by 2000, dropping New York to third.

State rankings fluctuate from census to census depending on population growth. However, some state rankings progressively increased during the century, while others progressively declined. In 2000,

15 states were ranked at their highest level of the century. All of these states were either in the West (ten states or the South (five states). In contrast, 11 states ranked at their highest point during the century in 1900. Most of these are in the Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont) and the Midwest (Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Nebraska). None of these states is in the West. Although five states in the South were at their peak rank in 2000 (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Texas, and Virginia), three states in the South had their highest population rank in 1900—Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

While population changes altered the state ranking order, most state ranks did not vary by more than ten positions during the 100-year period. Five states increased their ranking by more than ten places: four states in the West (Arizona, California, Nevada, and Washington), plus Florida, which increased in rank more than any other state, from 33rd to 4th. (Arizona's rank increased nearly as much, from 48th in 1900 to 20th in 2000.)

Seven states and the District of Columbia dropped by more than ten places in their ranking over the century, all of them either in the Midwest or the South. Iowa's ranking declined the most, from 10th in 1900 to 30th in 2000.

Table 1-2.  
**States Ranked by Population Size: 1900, 1950, and 2000**

State	1900	1950	2000
Alabama	18	17	23
Alaska	50	51	48
Arizona	48	38	20
Arkansas	25	30	33
California	21	2	1
Colorado	32	34	24
Connecticut	29	28	29
Delaware	45	48	45
District of Columbia	41	36	50
Florida	33	20	4
Georgia	11	13	10
Hawaii	47	46	42
Idaho	46	44	39
Illinois	3	4	5
Indiana	8	12	14
Iowa	10	22	30
Kansas	22	31	32
Kentucky	12	19	25
Louisiana	23	21	22
Maine	31	35	40
Maryland	26	24	19
Massachusetts	7	9	13
Michigan	9	7	8
Minnesota	19	18	21
Mississippi	20	26	31
Missouri	5	11	17
Montana	43	43	44
Nebraska	27	33	38
Nevada	51	50	35
New Hampshire	37	45	41
New Jersey	16	8	9
New Mexico	44	40	36
New York	1	1	3
North Carolina	15	10	11
North Dakota	40	42	47
Ohio	4	5	7
Oklahoma	30	25	27
Oregon	36	32	28
Pennsylvania	2	3	6
Rhode Island	35	37	43
South Carolina	24	27	26
South Dakota	38	41	46
Tennessee	14	16	16
Texas	6	6	2
Utah	42	39	34
Vermont	39	47	49
Virginia	17	15	12
Washington	34	23	15
West Virginia	28	29	37
Wisconsin	13	14	18
Wyoming	49	49	51

Note: States in color are or have ranked in the top ten most populous states.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900, 1950, and 2000.

## Among the 50 states, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut had the highest population densities throughout the century.

Since population density is determined both by population size and by land area, relatively less-populated states can have a high population density, and relatively more-populated states can have a low population density. For example, Rhode Island ranked first among the 50 states in population density in each census from 1900 through 1960, even though it ranked among the smaller states in population size.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, Texas, which became the second-most populated state in 2000, still ranked 28th in terms of population density at the end of the century.

At the beginning of the century, all the more densely populated states were in the eastern half of the country (see Figure 1-13). State densities generally increased over time as the population increased, since the changes in the land area of states during the period were minimal.<sup>12</sup> Even in 2000, the eastern half of the country remained more densely populated than the western half.

Most of the states with a high population density have a relatively small total land area. As noted above, Rhode Island had the highest population density among the 50 states from 1900 to 1960. By 1970, New Jersey had become the country's most densely populated state and has remained so since then. At the end of the century, both of these states had

population densities of more than 1,000 people per square mile (see Appendix Table 2). Massachusetts had the second or third highest density level throughout the century, and Connecticut ranked fourth every decade from 1900 to 2000.

Throughout the 20th century, all of the least densely populated states were relatively large-area states in the West and Midwest regions. Maine was the Northeast region's least densely populated state throughout the century. From 1900 to 1950, the least densely populated state in the South was either Florida or Texas. From 1960 to 2000, Oklahoma and Arkansas had the lowest population densities in the South. For the West region and for the United States, Alaska (with just over one person per square mile in 2000) had the lowest population density of all the states, a result of the combination of a relatively small population size and a very large land area. Prior to Alaska's statehood in 1960, the state with the lowest population density every decade was Nevada.

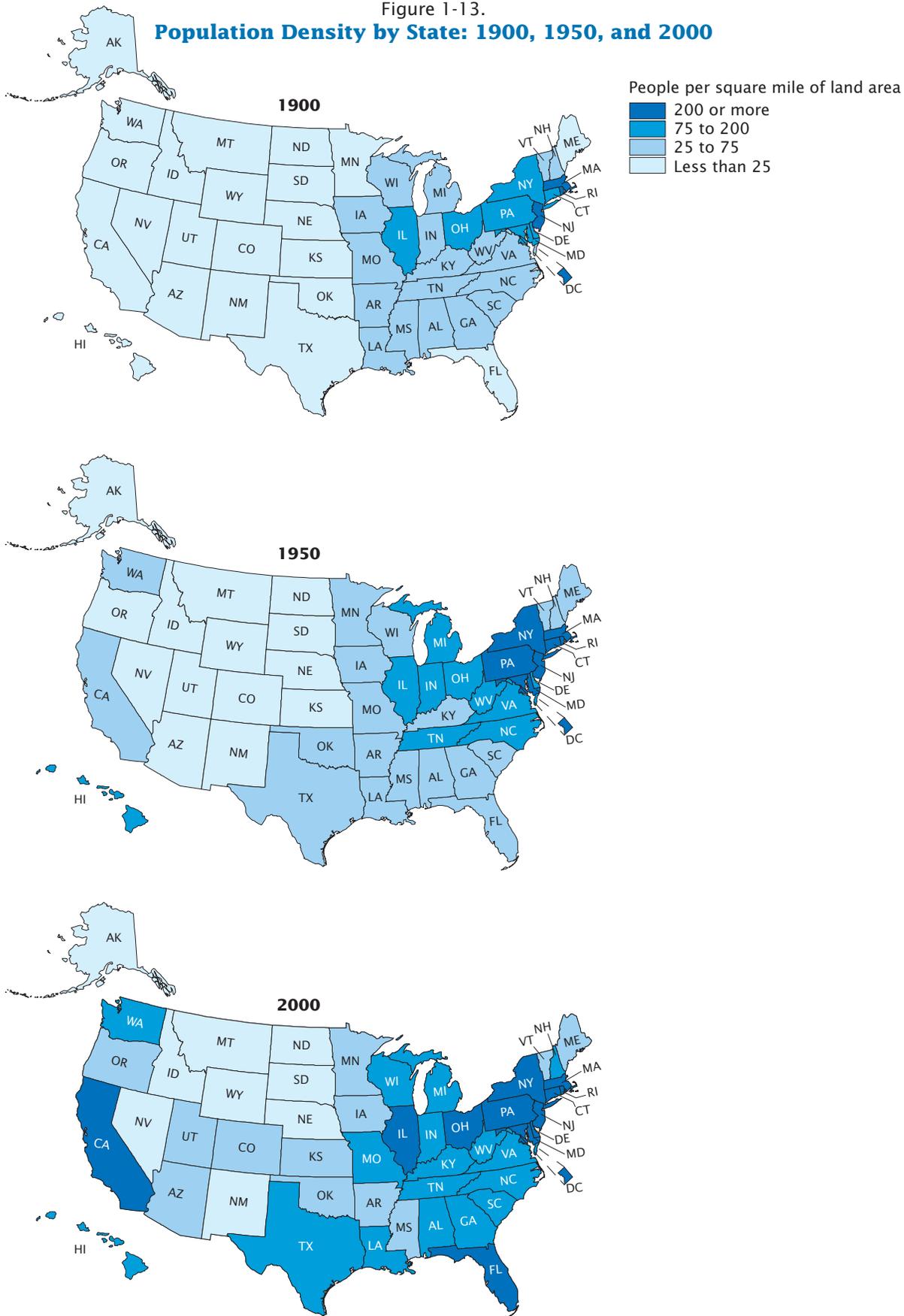
The number of states with more than 200 people per square mile increased from 3 (New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts) in 1900 to 12 in 2000. The nine additional states, ranked by density in 2000, are: Connecticut, Maryland, New York, Delaware, Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and California.

In 1900, 14 states (and Alaska) had densities of fewer than 10 people per square mile. They included Florida and California, which, as noted above, had increased to more than 200 people per square mile by the end of the century. Five states—South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, and Alaska—still had fewer than ten people per square mile in 2000.

<sup>11</sup> The District of Columbia is usually considered a state equivalent for statistical purposes, and its density was higher by far than all 50 states throughout the century. However, it is excluded from the general discussion of state population density due to its lesser comparability attributable to a relatively small land area and its greater comparability to other cities, rather than states.

<sup>12</sup> State population density calculations in this report are based on land area measurement used for Census 2000.

Figure 1-13.  
**Population Density by State: 1900, 1950, and 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900, 1950, and 2000.

## In 1950, the U.S. population became predominantly metropolitan and became increasingly more metropolitan in each subsequent decade.

The U.S. Census Bureau defined metropolitan population concentrations<sup>13</sup> for the first time in 1910. At that time, 26.1 million people lived in 19 metropolitan districts of 200,000 or more population and cities of 100,000 to 200,000 and their adjacent territory, leaving 65.9 million who lived in nonmetropolitan territory. With each passing decade, the metropolitan population increased, while the nonmetropolitan population generally decreased (see Figure 1-14).

While metropolitan concentrations certainly grew as a result of births and migration, they also grew as a result of territorial expansion. Over the course of the century, the changing definition of “metropolitan” caused new areas to achieve metropolitan status and existing metropolitan areas to acquire more territory.

<sup>13</sup> The 1910 forerunner of a metropolitan area was the “metropolitan district.” Metropolitan districts/areas were redefined at each census. The definition of metropolitan areas was based on county boundaries for the first time in 1950 (see the Glossary). Data presented in Figures 1-14 through 1-19 are based on the definition of metropolitan at the time of each census.

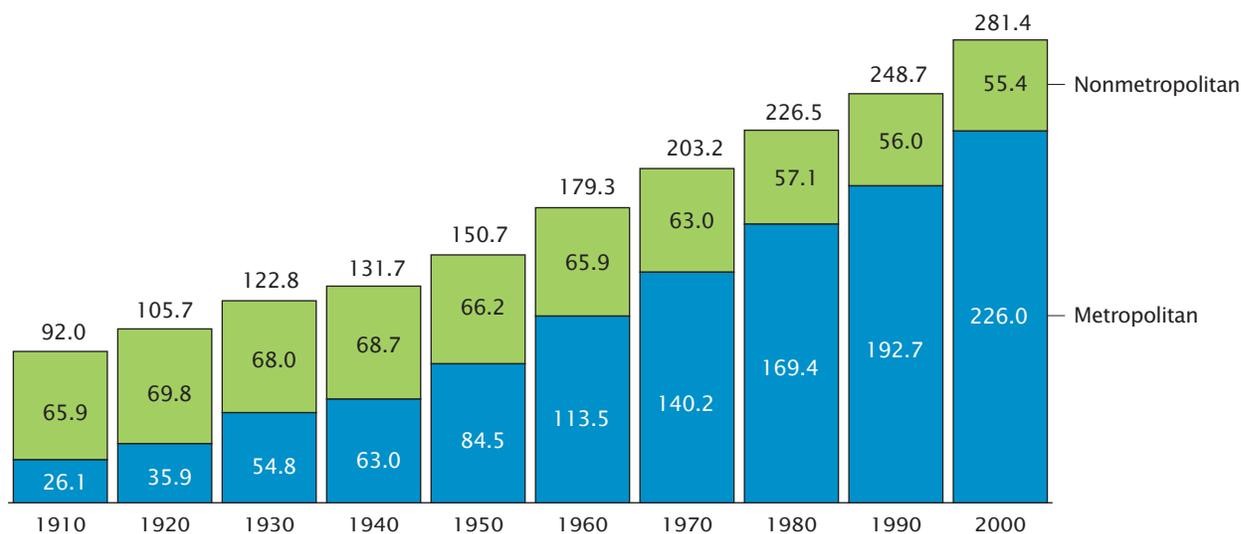
During the early part of the century, the metropolitan population grew quickly, due in part to the influx of immigrants into large cities, while the nonmetropolitan population changed very little. The smallest increase in the metropolitan population occurred during the 1930s (8.2 million people). This was also the last decade when the nonmetropolitan population increased, although it remained larger than the metropolitan population into the 1940s.

By 1950, the U.S. population had become predominantly metropolitan for the first time, and the metropolitan population exceeded the nonmetropolitan population by 18.3 million people. By 2000, the metropolitan population (226 million) was four times the size of the nonmetropolitan population (55 million).

From 1910 to 2000, the metropolitan population grew by nearly 200 million people, with the largest increase, 33.3 million, occurring from 1990 to 2000.

Figure 1-14.  
**Total Population by Metropolitan Status: 1910 to 2000**

(Millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1910 to 2000.

## While the metropolitan population grew rapidly during the century, most of that growth occurred in the suburbs, with little change in the percentage of population living in central cities.

Metropolitan areas accounted for a growing proportion of the U.S. population over the course of the century. In 1910, less than a third (28 percent) of the total population lived in metropolitan areas, but by 1950, more than half of the U.S. population lived in metropolitan areas. In 2000, the metropolitan population represented 80 percent of the U.S. resident total of 281.4 million people (see Figure 1-15).

The highest percentage increase in metropolitan population growth occurred from 1920 to 1930, when metropolitan areas grew by 52 percent. The lowest metropolitan percentage growth occurred from 1980 to 1990, when metropolitan areas grew by 14 percent.

Metropolitan areas include two parts: central cities and suburbs.<sup>14</sup> From 1910 to 2000, suburbs accounted for most of the growth of metropolitan areas.

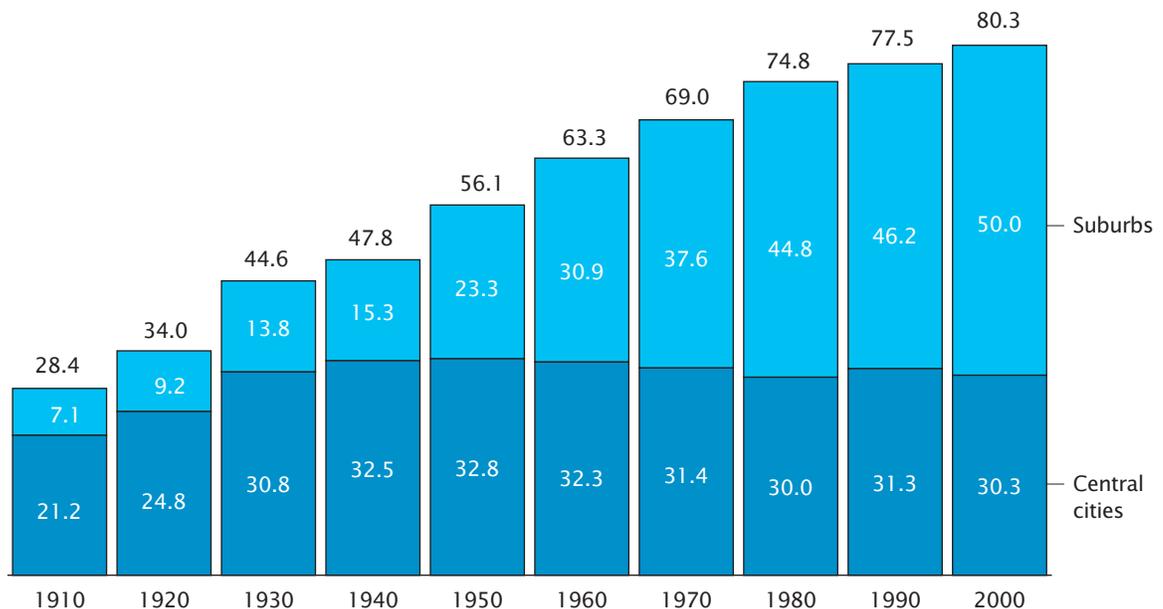
From 1910 to 1960, the population of central cities accounted for a larger proportion of the total population than the population living in suburbs. For example, in 1910, 21 percent of the total U.S. population lived in central cities, while only 7 percent of the population lived in suburbs.

From 1910 to 1930, both central cities and suburbs grew rapidly. Growth in the 1930s continued, but at a slower pace. From 1940 onward, suburbs accounted for more population growth than central cities and, by 1960, the proportion of the total U.S. population living in the suburbs (31 percent) was almost equal to the proportion of the population living in the central cities (32 percent).

From 1940 to 2000, the proportion of the population living in central cities remained relatively stable, while the suburbs continued to grow substantially. By 2000, half of the entire U.S. population lived in the suburbs of metropolitan areas.

<sup>14</sup> For the definitions of metropolitan, central city, and suburb, see the Glossary.

Figure 1-15.  
**Percent of Total Population Living in Metropolitan Areas and in Their Central Cities and Suburbs: 1910 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1910 to 2000.

## Since 1990, more than half of the U.S. population has lived in metropolitan areas of at least 1 million people.

Most of the metropolitan population lives in relatively large concentrations (see Figure 1-16). In 1950, only 14 metropolitan areas had populations of at least 1 million people, which constituted less than a third (29 percent) of the total U.S. population. By 2000, 50 metropolitan areas had populations of at least 1 million people, which accounted for over half (57 percent) of the total U.S. population.<sup>15</sup>

From 1950 to 2000, the population living in metropolitan areas of at least 1 million people increased by 117.1 million and accounted for 83 percent of the total metropolitan growth and 90 percent of the total U.S. population growth. It is important to note that the growth of the different size categories of metropolitan areas is directly affected by the addition of new metropolitan

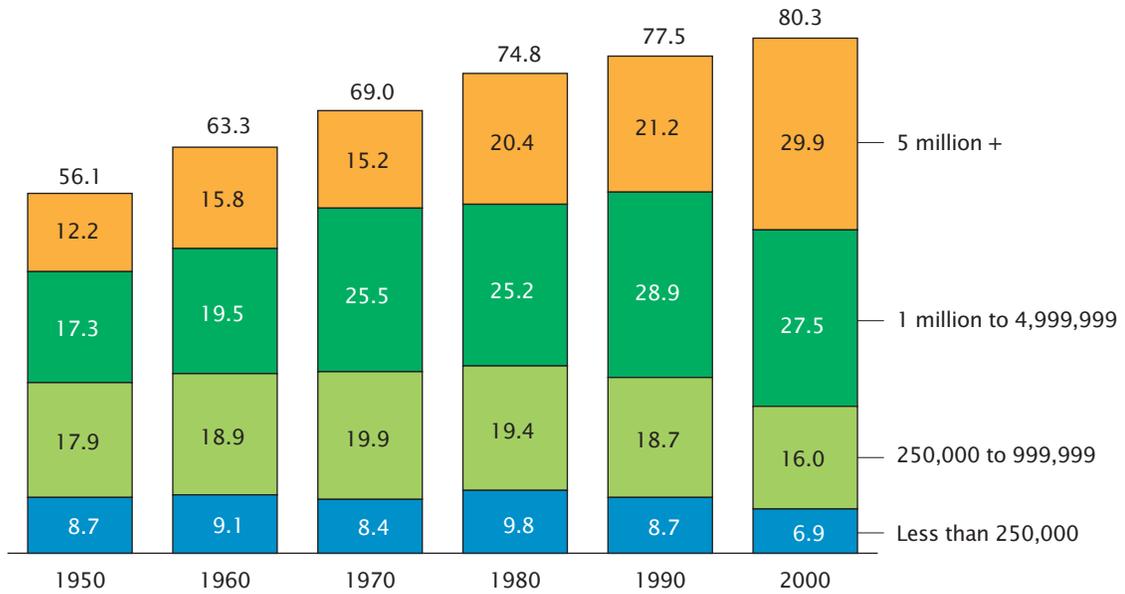
areas, the movement of existing metropolitan areas into larger size categories due to population increase, and the territorial growth of metropolitan areas due to changing metropolitan boundaries, which often adds counties to existing metropolitan areas.

Between 1950 and 2000, the share of the population living in metropolitan areas with 1 million up to 5 million people and with 5 million or more people increased greatly (by 10.2 and 17.7 percentage points, respectively), while the share of the population living in the other two size categories stayed within a narrow range. Although the share of the population living in metropolitan areas of 250,000 up to 1 million, and less than 250,000 increased in two decades during the 50-year period, a smaller share of the U.S. population lived in these areas in 2000 than in 1950. For the two larger size classes, the lowest population share occurred in 1950, while for the two smaller size classes, the lowest population share occurred in 2000.

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<sup>15</sup> Metropolitan trends have been limited in most figures to censuses since 1950, when metropolitan areas based on county units were first defined.

Figure 1-16.  
**Percent of Total Population Living in Metropolitan Areas by  
 Size of Metropolitan Area Population: 1950 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1950 to 2000.

## From 1950 to 2000, New York was the most populous metropolitan area.

Since 1950, the ten largest metropolitan areas have always had populations of 1 million or more. In 1950, Cleveland, Ohio, the 10th largest metropolitan area had nearly 1.5 million people. By 2000, the 10th largest metropolitan area, Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, Texas, had a population of 4.7 million (see Table 1-3).

In 1950, New York and Chicago were the only metropolitan areas with populations of 5 million or more. Their combined population in 1950 (18.4 million) accounted for 12.2 percent of the total U.S. population.<sup>16</sup> By 2000, they had been joined by 7 other metropolitan areas,<sup>17</sup> creating a combined population of 84.1 million, or 29.9 percent of the U.S. total. By 2000, nearly 1 in 3 Americans lived in a metropolitan area with 5 million or more residents.

While metropolitan areas grew significantly from 1950 to 2000, some relatively slower-growing metropolitan areas in the Northeast and the Midwest dropped out of the category of the ten largest metropolitan areas. For example, the tenth largest metropolitan area in 1950, Cleveland, Ohio, was no longer in the top ten by 1960.

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<sup>16</sup> See U.S. Census Bureau. 1991. *Metropolitan Areas and Cities*. 1990 Census Profile, Number 3.

<sup>17</sup> Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, Washington-Baltimore, San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, Boston-Worcester-Lawrence, Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint, and Dallas-Fort Worth.

St. Louis, Missouri, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, dropped out of the top ten by 1980, when Houston-Galveston, Texas, and Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, were added for the first time.

From 1950 to 2000, New York was the largest metropolitan area in the United States, with a population ranging from 12.9 million people in 1950 to 21.2 million people in 2000.<sup>18</sup> In 2000, New York accounted for 7.5 percent of the total U.S. population. From 1950 to 1970, Chicago and Los Angeles were the second and third largest metropolitan areas in the United States, respectively. However, from 1980 to 2000, they switched ranks and Los Angeles was the second most populous metropolitan area.

While New York remained by far the largest metropolitan area in the United States from 1950 to 2000, its proportional lead over the second largest metropolitan area slowly closed from 1950 to 1990 and then slightly increased from 1990 to 2000. In 1950, New York was more than twice the size of Chicago, the second largest metropolitan area. However, by 2000, New York was about 1.3 times the size of Los Angeles, the next largest metropolitan area.

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<sup>18</sup> Although metropolitan areas were first classified as such in 1950, clearly New York ranked first in metropolitan population throughout the entire century.

Table 1-3.  
**Ten Most Populous Metropolitan Areas: 1950 to 2000**

Year and area	Region	Population
<b>1950</b>		
New York, N.Y.-Northeastern New Jersey SMA	Northeast	12,911,994
Chicago, Ill. SMA	Midwest	5,495,364
Los Angeles, Calif. SMA	West	4,367,911
Philadelphia, Pa. SMA	Northeast	3,671,048
Detroit, Mich. SMA	Midwest	3,016,197
Boston, Mass. SMA	Northeast	2,369,986
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif. SMA	West	2,240,767
Pittsburgh, Pa. SMA	Northeast	2,213,236
St. Louis, Mo. SMA	Midwest	1,681,281
Cleveland, Ohio SMA	Midwest	1,465,511
<b>1960</b>		
New York, N.Y.-Northeastern New Jersey SCA	Northeast	14,759,429
Chicago, Ill.-Northwestern Indiana SCA	Midwest	6,794,461
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif. SMSA	West	6,742,696
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J. SMSA	Northeast	4,342,897
Detroit, Mich. SMSA	Midwest	3,762,360
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif. SMSA	West	2,783,359
Boston, Mass. SMSA	Northeast	2,589,301
Pittsburgh, Pa. SMSA	Northeast	2,405,435
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill. SMSA	Midwest	2,060,103
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va. SMSA	South	2,001,897
<b>1970</b>		
New York, N.Y.-Northeastern New Jersey SCA	Northeast	16,178,700
Chicago, Ill.-Northwestern Indiana SCA	Midwest	7,612,314
Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif. SMSA	West	7,032,075
Philadelphia, Pa.-N.J. SMSA	Northeast	4,817,914
Detroit, Mich. SMSA	Midwest	4,199,931
San Francisco-Oakland, Calif. SMSA	West	3,109,519
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va. SMSA	South	2,861,123
Boston, Mass. SMSA	Northeast	2,753,700
Pittsburgh, Pa. SMSA	Northeast	2,401,245
St. Louis, Mo.-Ill. SMSA	Midwest	2,363,017
<b>1980</b>		
New York-Newark-Jersey City, N.Y.- N.J.-Conn. SCSA	Northeast	16,121,297
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, Calif. SCSA	West	11,497,568
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, Ill.-Ind.-Wis. SCSA	Midwest	7,869,542
Philadelphia-Wilmington-Trenton, Pa.-Del.-N.J.-Md. SCSA <sup>1</sup>	Northeast	5,547,902
San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, Calif. SCSA	West	5,179,784
Detroit-Ann Arbor, Mich. SCSA	Midwest	4,618,161
Boston-Lawrence-Lowell, Mass.-N.H. SCSA	Northeast	3,448,122
Houston-Galveston, Tex. SCSA	South	3,101,293
Washington, D.C.-Md.-Va. SMSA	South	3,060,922
Dallas-Fort Worth, Tex. SMSA	South	2,974,805
<b>1990</b>		
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT CMSA	Northeast	18,087,251
Los Angeles-Anaheim-Riverside, CA CMSA	West	14,531,529
Chicago-Gary-Lake County, IL-IN-WI CMSA	Midwest	8,065,633
San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA CMSA	West	6,253,311
Philadelphia-Wilmington-Trenton, PA-NJ-DE-MD CMSA <sup>1</sup>	Northeast	5,899,345
Detroit-Ann Arbor, MI CMSA	Midwest	4,665,236
Boston-Lawrence-Salem, MA-NH CMSA	Northeast	4,171,643
Washington, DC-MD-VA MSA	South	3,923,574
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX CMSA	South	3,885,415
Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, TX CMSA	South	3,711,043
<b>2000</b>		
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA CMSA	Northeast	21,199,865
Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, CA CMSA	West	16,373,645
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI CMSA	Midwest	9,157,540
Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	South	7,608,070
San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA CMSA	West	7,039,362
Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, PA-NJ-DE-MD CMSA <sup>1</sup>	Northeast	6,188,463
Boston-Worcester-Lawrence, MA-NH-ME-CT CMSA	Northeast	5,819,100
Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint, MI CMSA	Midwest	5,456,428
Dallas-Fort Worth, TX CMSA	South	5,221,801
Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, TX CMSA	South	4,669,571

<sup>1</sup>A small portion of the Philadelphia SCSA (1980) and CMSA (1990 and 2000) includes population in states of the South region (Delaware and Maryland).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1950 to 2000.

## **The density of central cities declined during the second half of the century, yet remained far higher than the densities of suburban areas, which increased, and the densities of nonmetropolitan areas, which were steady during the period.**

Metropolitan population density levels remained higher than nonmetropolitan density (see Figure 1-17) since 1950, when metropolitan areas were first defined. From 1950 to 2000, the density of metropolitan areas ranged from 299 to 407 people per square mile, and the density of nonmetropolitan territory ranged from 19 to 24 people per square mile.

While the density of nonmetropolitan areas remained relatively stable from 1950 to 2000, the density of metropolitan areas fluctuated.<sup>19</sup> The peak of metropolitan population density in the last half of the century occurred in 1950. Then, it declined steadily from 1950 to 1980, driven primarily by the steep decline in the population of central cities, one of the components of metropolitan areas. As Figure 1-17 shows, the density of central cities was substantially higher than the density of suburban and nonmetropolitan areas throughout the second half of the century, although it declined every decade during this period, from a peak of 7,517 people per square mile in 1950 to a low of 2,716 people per square mile in 2000.

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<sup>19</sup> The relative stability of nonmetropolitan density occurred even though the nonmetropolitan population was smaller in 2000 than in 1950. A corresponding decline in the total area of nonmetropolitan territory partially offset the drop in population.

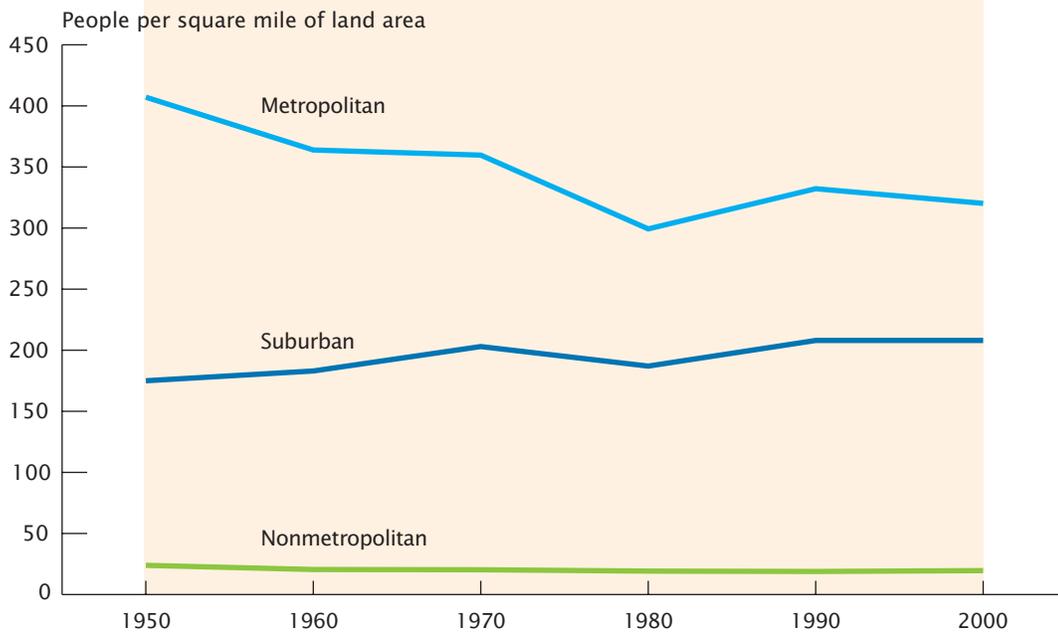
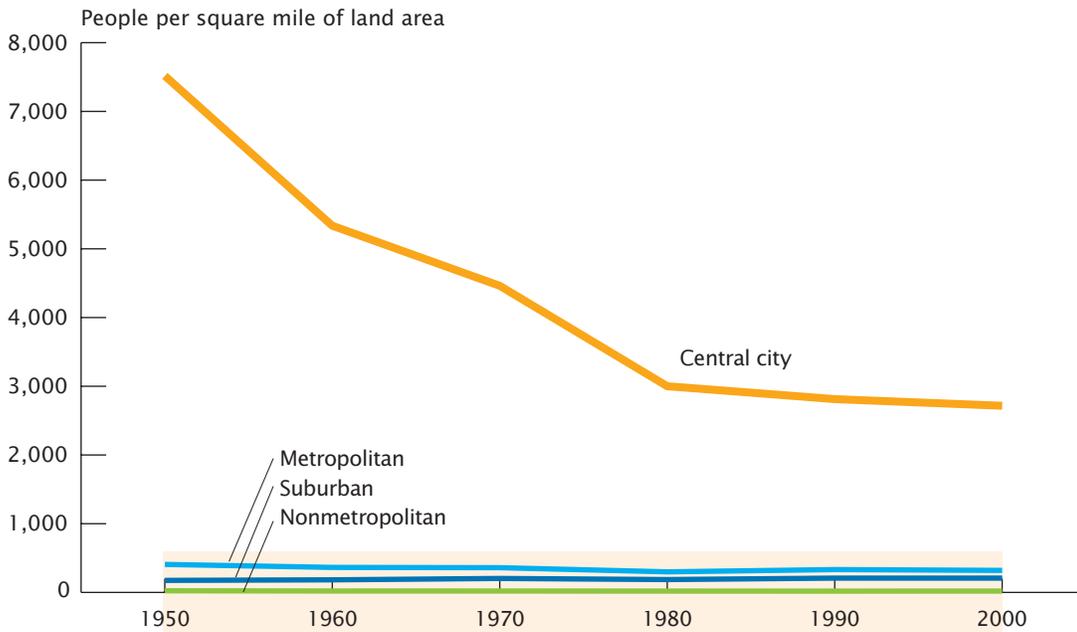
The decline of central city populations was partly offset by the movement of population into the suburbs, the other component of metropolitan areas. The density of suburban areas steadily increased from 1950 to 1970, however, this increase had little effect on the overall density of metropolitan areas. To some extent, this phenomenon reflects the addition of land area (usually relatively lower density suburban counties) to metropolitan areas as a whole with each passing census.<sup>20</sup> Increased land area, coupled with population declines of many central cities, resulted in an overall decline in metropolitan density between 1950 and 2000.

In the 1980s, metropolitan area density increased slightly, then decreased slightly in the 1990s. Similarly, the density of the suburban areas increased slightly from 1980 to 1990, then leveled off from 1990 to 2000. Although the density of central cities continued to decline in both the 1980s and 1990s, the rate of the decline slowed considerably during this period.

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<sup>20</sup> The density levels for suburban areas shown in Figure 1-17 should be interpreted with caution. Suburban population as used in this report refers to the population living in metropolitan areas, outside central cities. Using this definition includes a nontrivial portion of county land area that is predominantly rural. This produces lower density levels than would result if suburban were defined by using the population living in the "urban fringe" of urbanized areas.

Figure 1-17.  
**Population Density by Metropolitan Area  
 Status: 1950 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1950 to 2000.

## **The Northeast had the highest percentage of people living in metropolitan areas of all four regions for the entire century.**

The percentage of people living in metropolitan areas increased in every decade for every region. In 1910, more than half of the Northeast's population, about a quarter of the Midwest's and the West's, and about a tenth of the South's population was metropolitan. By 2000, at least three quarters of the populations in the Northeast, the South, and the West were metropolitan and nearly three quarters (73.8 percent) of the population in the Midwest lived in metropolitan areas (see Figure 1-18).

The proportions of the populations that lived in metropolitan areas grew relatively faster in the South and the West than in the Northeast and the Midwest. In the South, the metropolitan population increased from 9 percent in 1910 to 75 percent in 2000, and in the West it grew from 28 percent in 1910 to 87 percent in 2000.

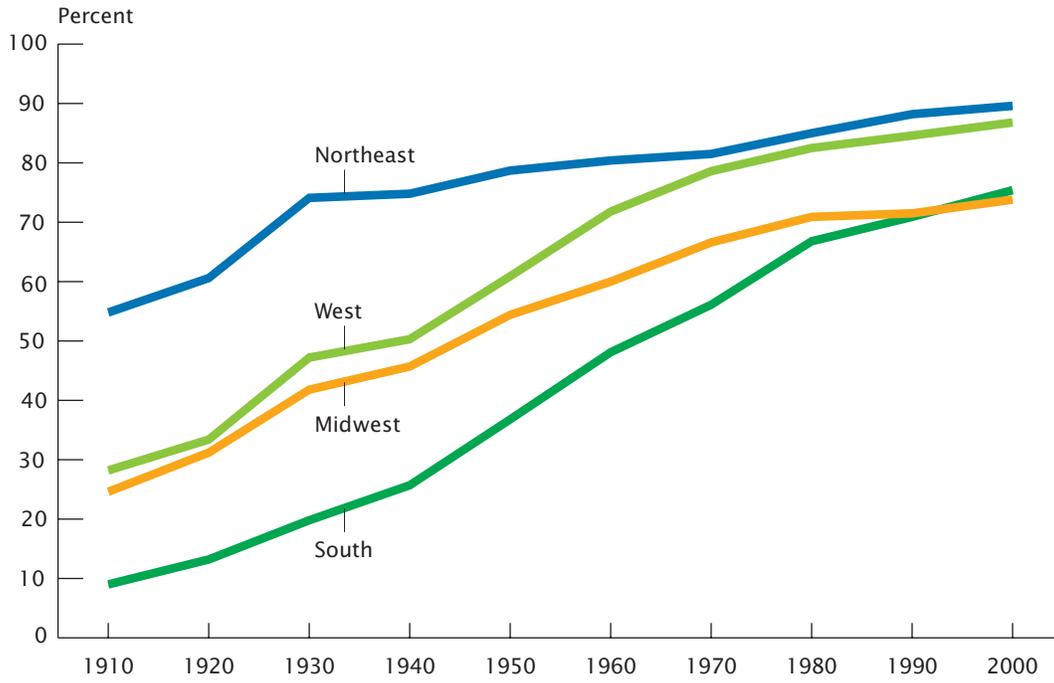
The ranking of the regions in terms of percentage metropolitan remained fairly stable over the century. The Northeast had the highest percentage of people living in metropolitan areas for the entire century. From 1910 to 1990, the Northeast was followed by the

West, the Midwest, and then the South. However, the South passed the Midwest for the first time in 2000, making the Midwest the least metropolitan of the regions.

Comparing the regions to the national average in terms of percentage of metropolitan population, the Northeast remained above the national average throughout the century and the West stayed above the national average from 1930 to 2000. However, the percentage metropolitan in the South and Midwest remained below the national average for the whole century.

As all four regions increased their metropolitan populations, the difference in the proportion living in metropolitan areas between the regions converged. The largest differential (54 percentage points) between the regions in the percentage metropolitan was in 1930 (74 percent in the Northeast compared with 20 percent in the South). By 2000, the difference between the regions had narrowed to 16 percentage points (90 percent in the Northeast compared with 74 percent in the Midwest).

Figure 1-18.  
**Percent of Population Living in Metropolitan  
 Areas by Region: 1910 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1910 to 2000.



## **The percentage of the U.S. population living in the ten largest cities increased to a peak in 1930, then declined every following decade of the century.**

Despite the significant growth of metropolitan areas in the United States, the percentage of the population living in the ten largest cities grew steadily in the first three decades of the 20th century, but declined appreciably over the next seven decades. The percentage of the population living in the ten largest cities peaked in 1930 (15.5 percent) and fell every decade thereafter, reaching its lowest point in 2000 (8.5 percent, see Figure 1-20).

The growth of the ten largest cities from 1900 to 1930 and their subsequent decline as a proportion of the U.S. population mirrors the growth and decline of the total central city population in the United States in the 20th century. During the first part of the century, immigrants as well as natives poured into the cities. In the second half of the century, the growth of cities slowed and in some cases even declined as the proportion of the population living in the suburbs increased.

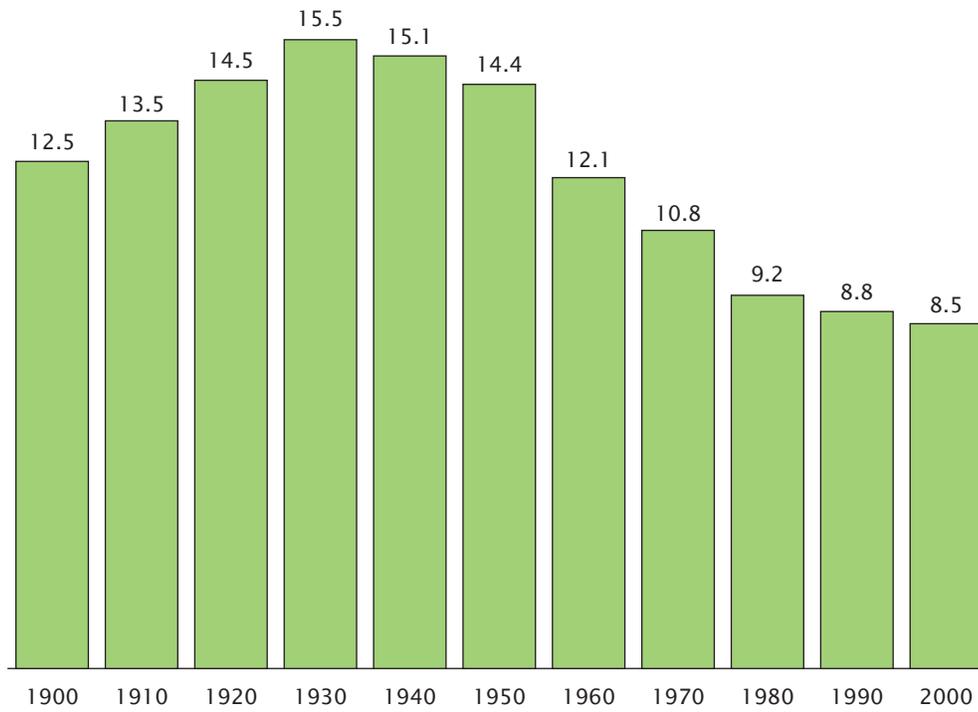
In 1900, 8 of the 10 largest cities were northeastern or midwestern cities. Among the largest cities, San Francisco was the only western city, and Baltimore was the only southern city (see Appendix Table 4). New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia, the only cities with 1 million or more population in 1900, also were the only cities to rank among the 10 largest throughout the century.

Los Angeles and Detroit grew rapidly, and by 1930 had crossed the 1-million-or-more population threshold. By mid-century, Buffalo, San Francisco, and Cincinnati had dropped out of the group of the ten largest cities, and had been replaced by Los Angeles (ranked 4th), Detroit (5th), and Washington, DC (9th). (Pittsburgh ranked among the ten largest cities from 1910 to 1940.)

Over the last half of the century, the growth and change in the ten largest cities reflected the growth of the U.S. population in the Sunbelt. During this period, St. Louis, Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Washington, DC, dropped out of the ten largest cities. They were either replaced by cities in Texas (Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio) or in the West (Phoenix and San Diego). None of the cities that fell from the list of the 10 largest ever reached 1 million population, while all the cities that replaced them passed the 1 million mark. In 2000, for the first time in U.S. history, a city (Detroit) declined from a population above 1 million to a population below 1 million.

Throughout the century, New York's population far exceeded the population of any other city, ranging from 3.4 million to 8.0 million. From 1900 to 2000, its population was always at least double the population of the second largest city.

Figure 1-20.  
**Percent of Total Population Living in the  
Ten Largest Cities: 1900 to 2000**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000.